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For Immediate Release:

EASTERN MOVES TO THE TOP TIER IN U.S. NEWS RANKINGS

CHARLESTON - Eastern Illinois University has moved from the second tier to the first tier of Midwestern regional universities in *U.S. News and World Report's* 2002 annual guide to *America's Best Colleges*, placing it among the top public universities in the Midwest.

Eastern, which moved up from 35th place last year to 31st place this year, is the only public university in Illinois listed in the first tier of four tiers of 145 institutions in the "Best Universities-Master's (Regional/Midwest)" ranking category - universities that offer a full range of undergraduate degrees and some master's degree programs, but few, if any, doctoral programs. Of the 145 Midwestern master's universities, 42 were placed in the first tier.

In addition, the magazine also rated Eastern fifth among all public Midwestern universities with master's programs, compared to seventh place last year.

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"It is thrilling to learn that this is the first time that Eastern has been ranked in the first tier of Midwestern master's universities. We have done very well in the past by consistently being ranked in the second tier, or quartile, but moving up a notch to the first tier is a tremendous accomplishment and reflects a continuing commitment by our faculty and staff to uphold Eastern's strong reputation for academic excellence," said Louis V. Hencken, EIU's interim president.

The rankings are based on schools' academic reputation, student selectivity, faculty resources, graduation and retention rates, financial resources and alumni giving.

Eastern's greatest strengths in addition to its academic reputation are its average graduation rate of 67 percent, which is the fifth highest percentage among schools listed in the first tier of Midwestern master's universities; freshman-to-sophomore retention rate of 81 percent - the seventh highest percentage; and percentage of full-time faculty (95 percent) - the second highest percentage.

The newsstand book, *America's Best Colleges*, which contains all of the *U.S. News* college rankings, is slated to go on sale Sept. 10. Many of the rankings and some of the articles from the book will be in the Sept. 17 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* which also goes on sale Sept. 10. The rankings are also available online at www.usnews.com.